



FAYETTE ALLIANCE

GROWING OUR CITY, PROMOTING OUR FARMS

Smart-growth strategy is working

Published in the Lexington-Herald Leader on Sunday, January 29, 2017
Written by Susan B. Speckert, Fayette Alliance Executive Director

Fayette County has a long history of innovative land-use planning. With the creation of the Urban Service Boundary in 1958, its goal was to prevent sprawl into rural areas. The USB serves twin purposes — it preserves our irreplaceable farmland and landscape, while directing development and investment inside our urban areas.

Directing development inside the USB accommodates growth responsibly and stimulates investment into and improvement of established urban areas, neighborhoods and public spaces.

This leads to a vibrant city, healthy neighborhoods, diversity of housing types, increased affordable housing, accessible public parks and green spaces, improved public services, opportunities for multimodal transportation and economic development.

Every five years, Lexington revisits its Comprehensive Plan, which provides the blueprint for how and where our community grows. One of the first steps in the process for the 2018 plan is for the Planning Commission to review the overarching goals and objectives that guide more detailed decisions on everything from zoning categories to street width. The Planning Commission then sends a recommendation to the Urban County Council, which ultimately adopts goals and objectives.

Citizens who care about Lexington's growth can and should express their opinions at one of five scheduled public input sessions on the plan that will be held the first two weeks of February.

The last time the USB was expanded was 1996. Since then, our leaders have committed to infill and redevelopment. Despite the benefits of this strategy, each time the Comprehensive Plan is reviewed, there are efforts to expand the USB and this time is no exception.

By recommitting to infill and redevelopment as our growth strategy, we can continue to make it easier and more likely that blighted, underutilized and vacant land will be reclaimed for commercial, residential and industrial uses — improving real estate values while also providing more opportunities for affordable housing and a variety of economic development.

It's a strategy that is clearly working. Lexington is coming to life in ways never imagined — from the exciting buzz downtown and in our neighborhoods to leveraging our world-class rural landscape in new and exciting ways, from the local food movement to expanded rural recreational opportunities and Horse Country tours.



FAYETTE ALLIANCE

GROWING OUR CITY, PROMOTING OUR FARMS

Irresponsible expansion threatens to take the steam out of transformational downtown redevelopment projects like Town Branch Trail and Commons and the Old Courthouse and Convention Center renovations.

We are addressing our affordable housing issue through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Quality affordable housing projects are under construction throughout the city, revitalizing our neighborhoods and improving their quality of life. We must continue to address the shortfall of quality affordable housing for working families as part of a viable and equitable growth strategy. Expansion drives investment out, instead of continuing to focus energy inside our city to benefit all our citizens.

As our city grows, so does our rural economy. Fayette County farms anchor an annual \$2.4 billion industry that supports 1 in 9 of the county's jobs. Our growing tourism industry contributes another \$2 billion a year and nearly 27,000 jobs.

Our smart growth strategy is working. Now is not the time to change course, particularly given that we have plenty of land to grow.

The city's Planning Division recently reported there are 6,228 acres of vacant land available for development inside the USB. This does not include blighted or underutilized land, which accounts for thousands more acres. By staying the course, we can ensure continued economic growth inside the USB, as well as outside.

Your voice counts. For more information about the public input sessions, visit the 2018 Comprehensive Plan website at www.lexingtonky.gov/get-involved. If you are unable to attend, please submit comments to imagine@lexingtonky.gov.